What Is a National Video Game?

STANISŁAW KRAWCZYK

INSTITUTE OF SOCIOLOGY,
UNIVERSITY OF WROCŁAW,
POLAND

"GAME STUDIES BY THE SEA"
SEMINAR

TECNOCAMPUS, UNIVERSITAT
POMPEU FABRA

ERASMUS+
TEACHING MOBILITY PROGRAM

JUNE 3, 2024

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Please feel free to **share, tweet, etc.**

The file can be downloaded from my website:

www.stanislawkrawczyk.pl

Acknowledgments

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1. Stanisław Krawczyk and Agata Waszkiewicz (“The Polish Video Game Heritage (1958–2025): A Catalog and a Bibliography”, NPRH – National Program for the Development of the Humanities, Poland)
2. Tereza Krobová (“Comprehensive Solutions for the Care of Cultural Heritage in the Field of Game Applications”, NAKI III – Programme to Support Applied Research in the Area of the National and Cultural Identity for the Years 2023 to 2030, the Czech Republic)
3. Larissa Wild and David Krummenacher (“Confederation Ludens: Swiss History of Games, Play and Game Design 1968–2000”, SNSF – National Science Foundation, Switzerland).

THE
WITCHER
III
WILD HUNT

Kingdom Come
Deliverance

DISCO ELYSIUM
THE FINAL CUT

Baldur's Gate III
© 2023 Wizards of the Coast LLC & Larian Studios Games Ltd

The Brussels Times

Belgian computer game tops best-selling charts worldwide

Saturday, 5 August 2023

Credit: Larian Studios

Baldur's Gate 3, co-created by Ghent-based video game developer Larian Studios and released on Thursday, is currently the best-selling computer game of the moment.

FOCUS ON BELGIUM
PEOPLE, STORIES, FACTS AND FIGURES

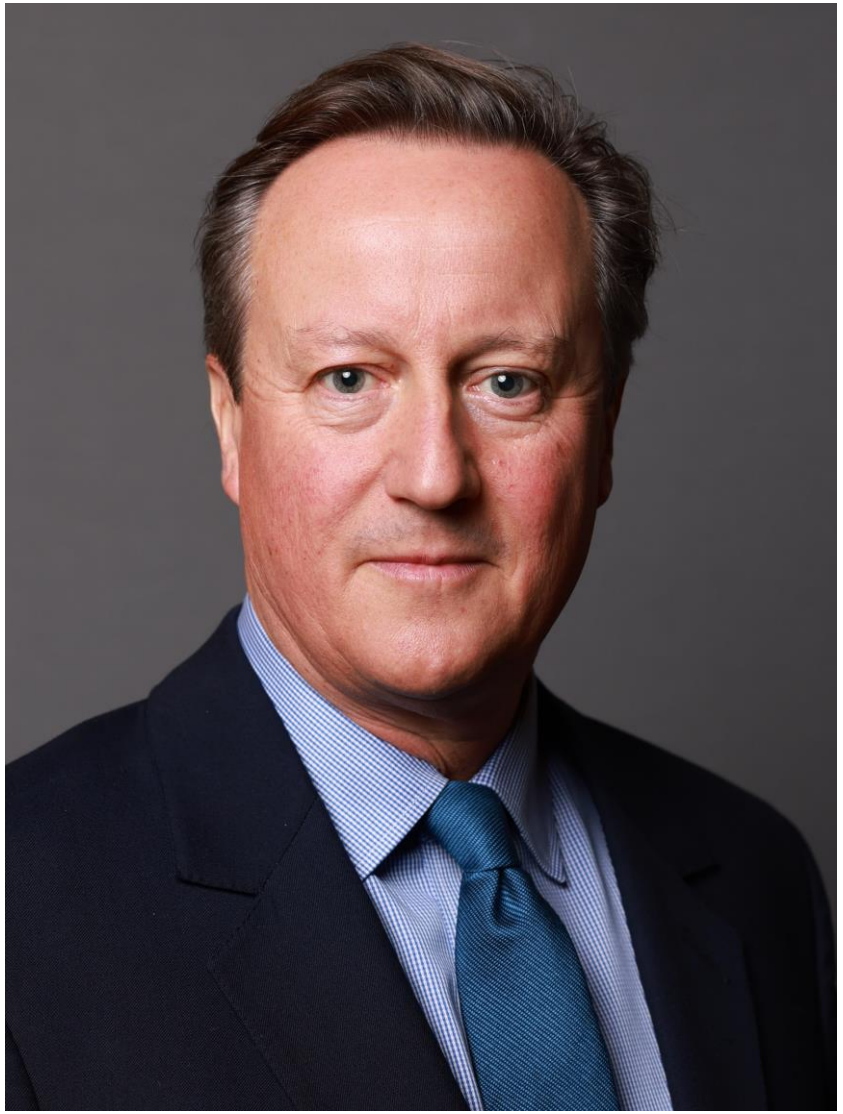
BALDUR'S GATE 3: BELGIAN VIDEO GAME TAKES WORLD BY STORM

10/08/2023

Baldur's Gate 3, a video game by the Belgian Larian Studios, is the most talked-about role-playing game of the summer.

© Pixabay

Are Video Games Getting “More National”?



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Theory & Psychology

Article

The national nature of globalization and the global nature of nationalism: Historically and methodologically entangled

Theory & Psychology
2023, Vol. 33(2) 175–192
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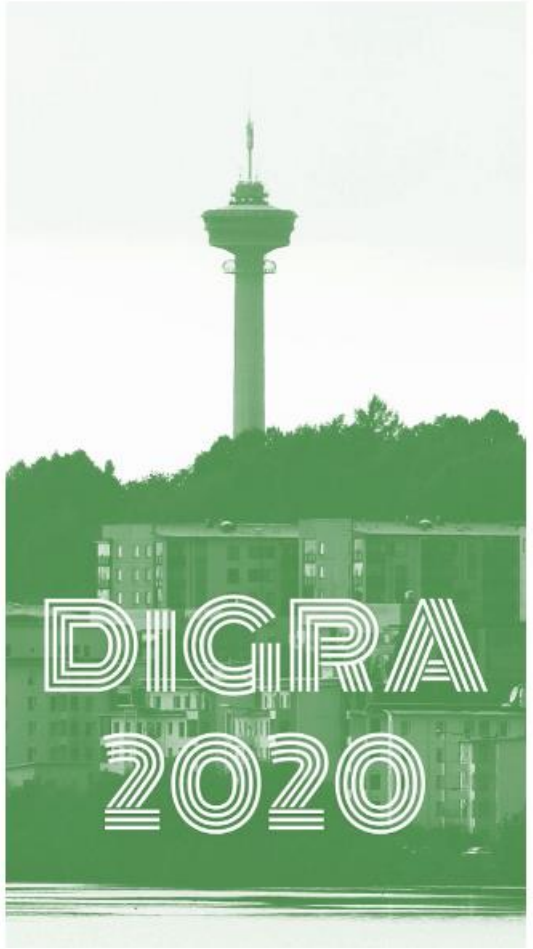
SAGE

Michael Billig
Loughborough University

Popular History: Historical Awareness of Digital Gaming in Finland from the 1980s to the 2010s

Jaakko Suominen

Keywords: historiography of digital games, everyday history, game journalism, timelines



Abstract

This paper studies the popular historiography of digital gaming. By using the Finnish context as a case example and analyzing hundreds of popular game-history-related articles, mostly from computer and game hobbyist magazines and newspapers, the paper presents a categorization of four different waves of historical awareness. All the waves emphasized different ways of writing and presenting game history, some focusing more on global issues and some on national and local phenomena. Some of the material was more oriented to personal or individual experiences and some merely toward the collective or general characteristics of gaming. The four-wave categorization and presented topics can be applied to other game historiographical studies to create a richer picture of how the academic and popular histories of games and game cultures have been written.

The fourth wave began in the 2000s. Due to the unprecedented rise of the Finnish digital games industry, the whole history of digital gaming has been investigated from a national standpoint, even though the Finnish digital game industry has been perceived in the global context. National game history has been portrayed in academic research, journalistic works as well as in other public situations. It seems that new emergent game-related institutions have had a need for histories, while history-oriented institutions have also been established.

The building of a national narrative around game history has been connected to the establishment of these national institutions that support the field: game developer associations, funding mechanisms, lobbying organizations, interest groups, museums, and others.

Polish Video Games: Invented Tradition?

Wiedźmin 2 – porcja nowych screenów

Andrzej Kała / 21.02.2011 komentarze: 0

Dostaliśmy kolejną porcję screenów z „Wiedźmina 2". Grafika wygląda tak dobrze, że nasuwa się na myśl iż to tylko przerywniki filmowe, ale gdzieś czuję że tak właśnie wygląda rozgrywka – po prostu bajecznie. Bez dwóch zdań – szykuje nam się polski RPG na iście światowym poziomie.

https://playingdaily.pl/2011/02/21/wiedzmin-2-porcja-nowych-screenow/

/ Ekonomia / BIZNES

Polskie gry wideo na światowym rynku

Polska staje się potęgą w produkcji gier komputerowych. Największe hity rodzimych producentów sprzedają się w milionach egzemplarzy.

Aktualizacja: 20.04.2011 04:17 Publikacja: 19.04.2011 20:53

https://www.rp.pl/biznes/art6725331-polskie-gry-wideo-na-swiatowym-rynku

Research on Video Games' Locations

Regional Game Studies

Liboriussen & Martin (2016), “Regional Game Studies”

Anh (2021), “Shifting the Focus to East and Southeast Asia:
A Critical Review of Regional Game Research”

Blignaut & Ravyse (2018), “Collating Researchable Issues of African Digital Games”

Mukherjee, S. (2022), *Videogames in the Indian Subcontinent…*

Penix-Tadsen, P. (2016), *Cultural Code: Video Games and Latin America*

Pérez-Latorre, Navarro-Remesal (2022), “Euro Ludens…”

More Perspectives

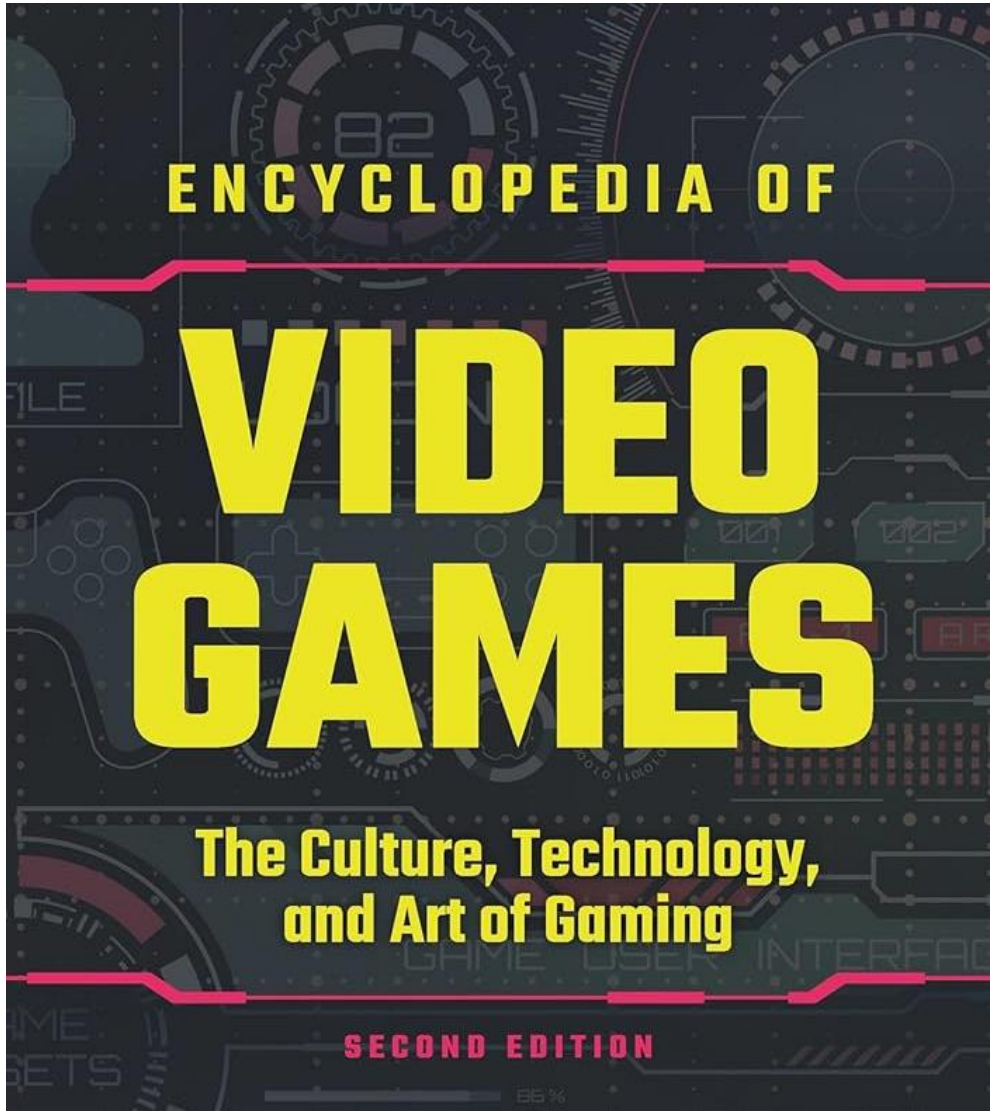
POSTCOLONIALISM: Mukherjee (2017),
Videogames and Postcolonialism: Empire Plays Back

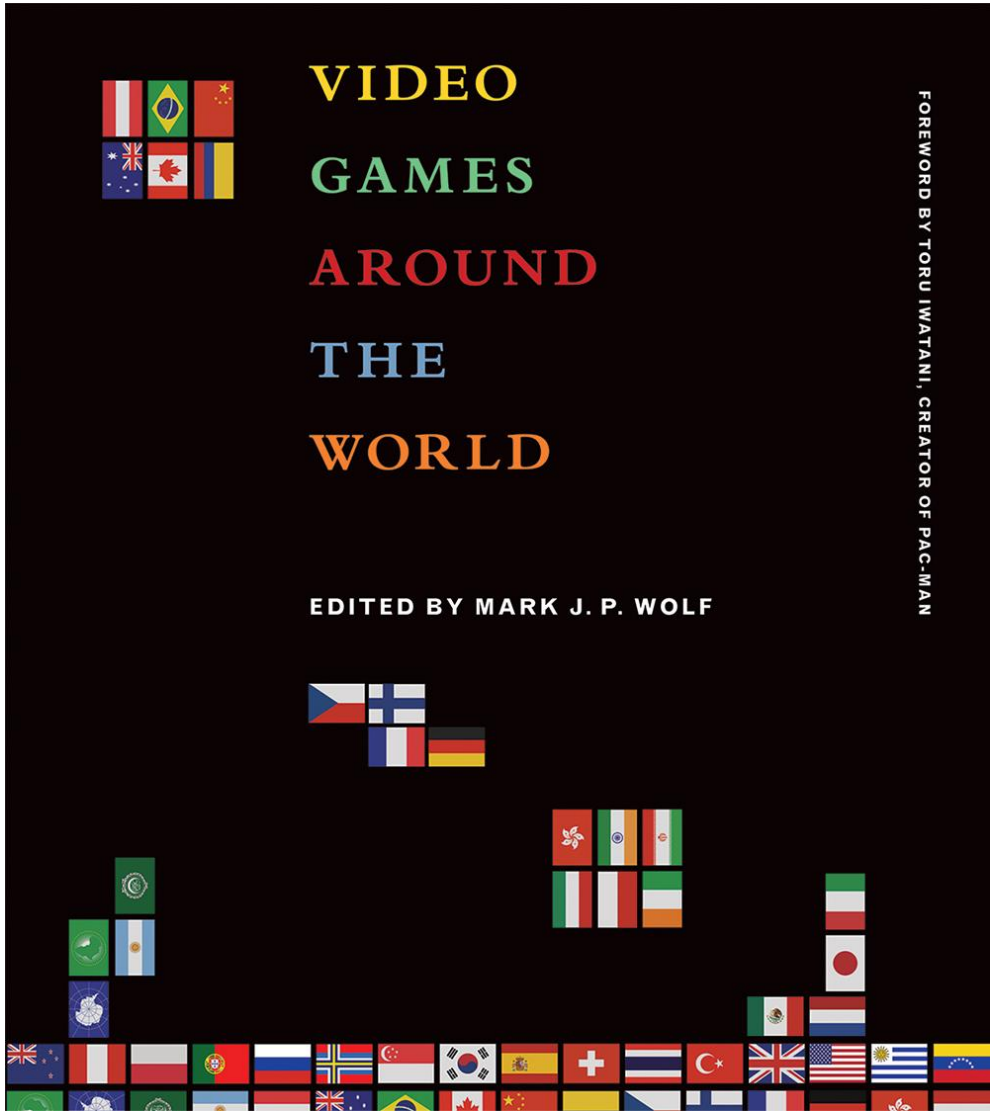
CULTURAL HERITAGE: Eklund et al. (2024), “Games for the Pluriverse…”

LOCALITY: Swalwell (2021), “Introduction” in *Game History and the Local*

CULTURE AND ETHNICITY (?): Grace (2021), *Black Game Studies…*;
Hammer, Rabinowitz, & Bisogno (2023), “What is Jewish about Jewish Games?”

Research on National Video Games


ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
VIDEO
GAMES
The Culture, Technology,
and Art of Gaming
SECOND EDITION


VIDEO
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AROUND
THE
WORLD
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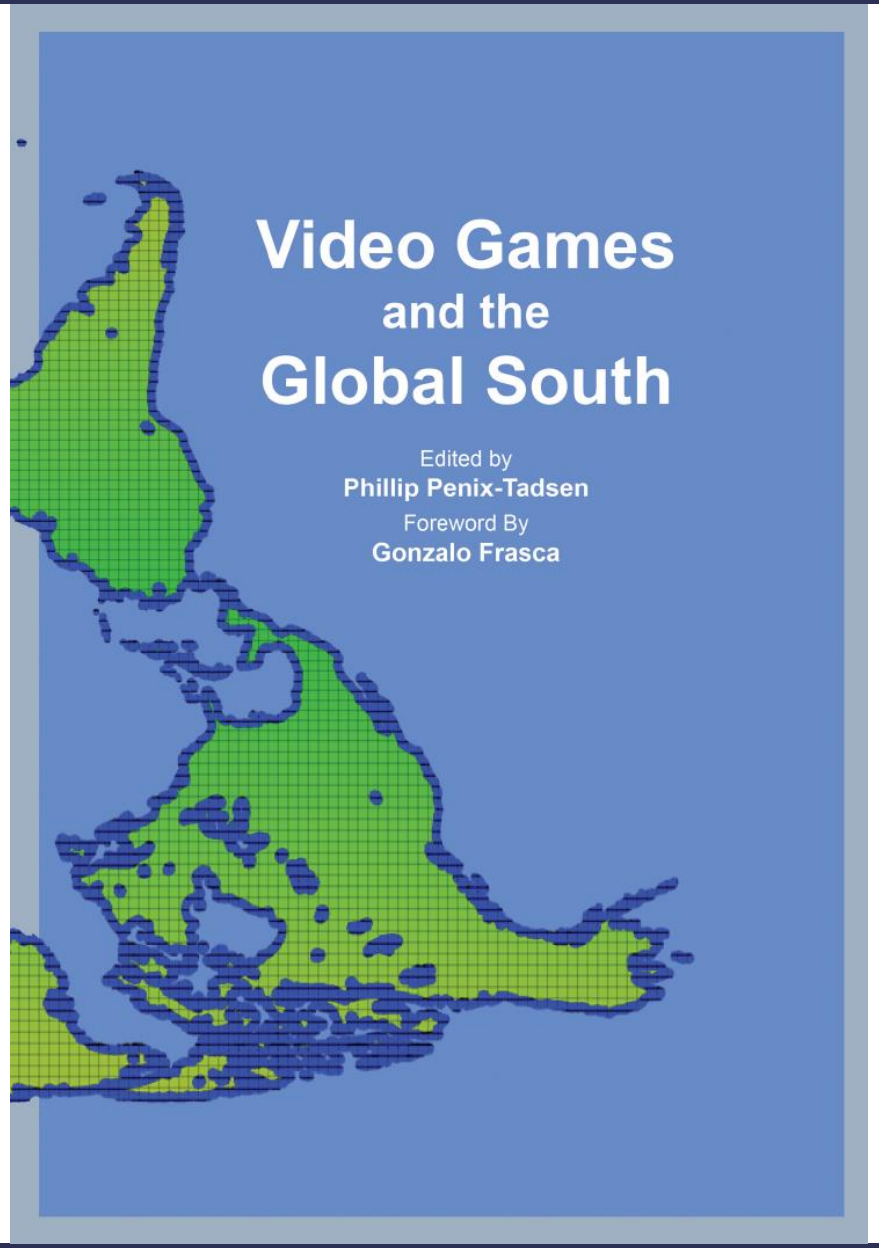
FOREWORD BY TORU IWATANI, CREATOR OF PAC-MAN


Video Games
and the
Global South
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Foreword By
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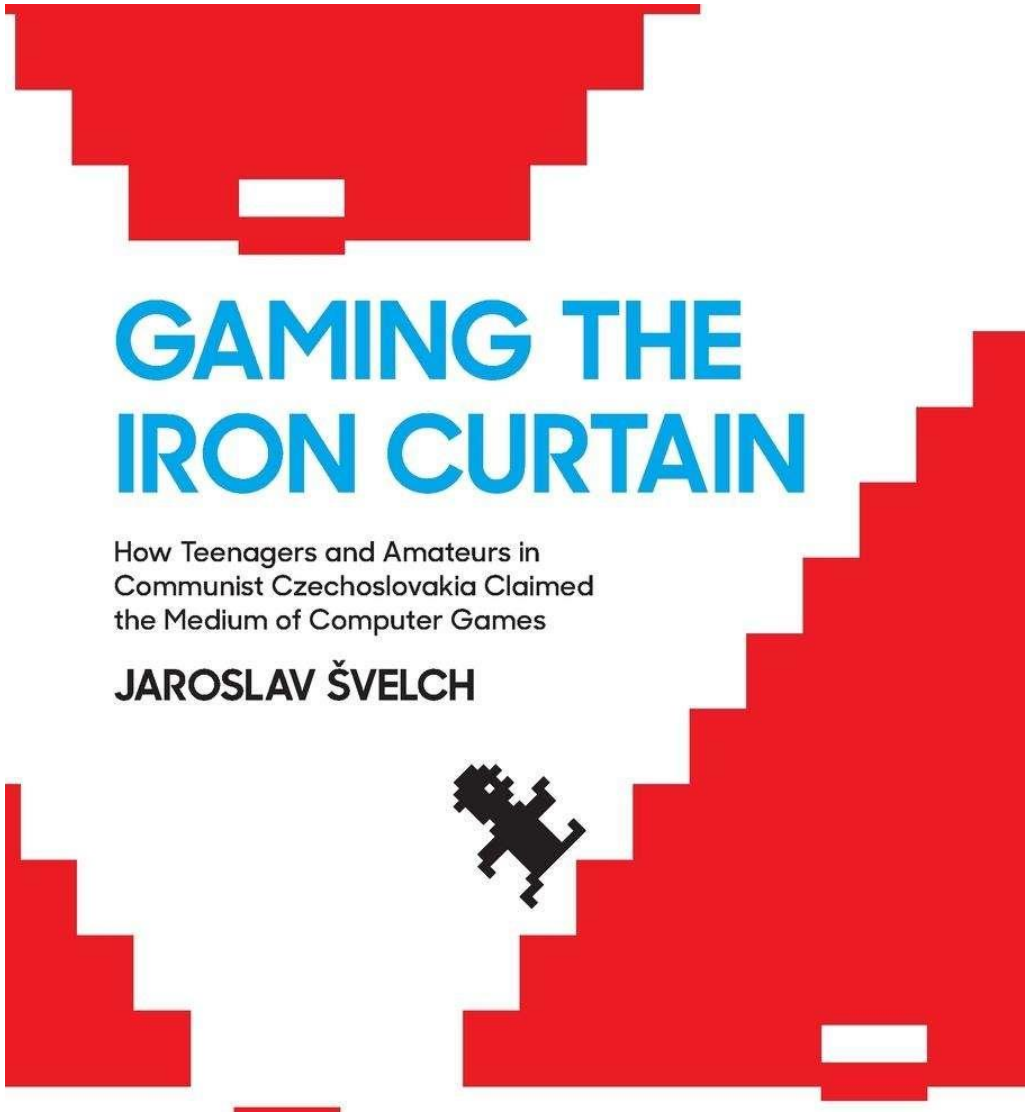

GAMING THE
IRON CURTAIN
How Teenagers and Amateurs in
Communist Czechoslovakia Claimed
the Medium of Computer Games
JAROSLAV ŠVELCH

Edited by Víctor Navarro-Remesal and Óliver Pérez-Latorre
Perspectives on the
European Videogame

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Studies in Eastern European Cinema

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/reec20

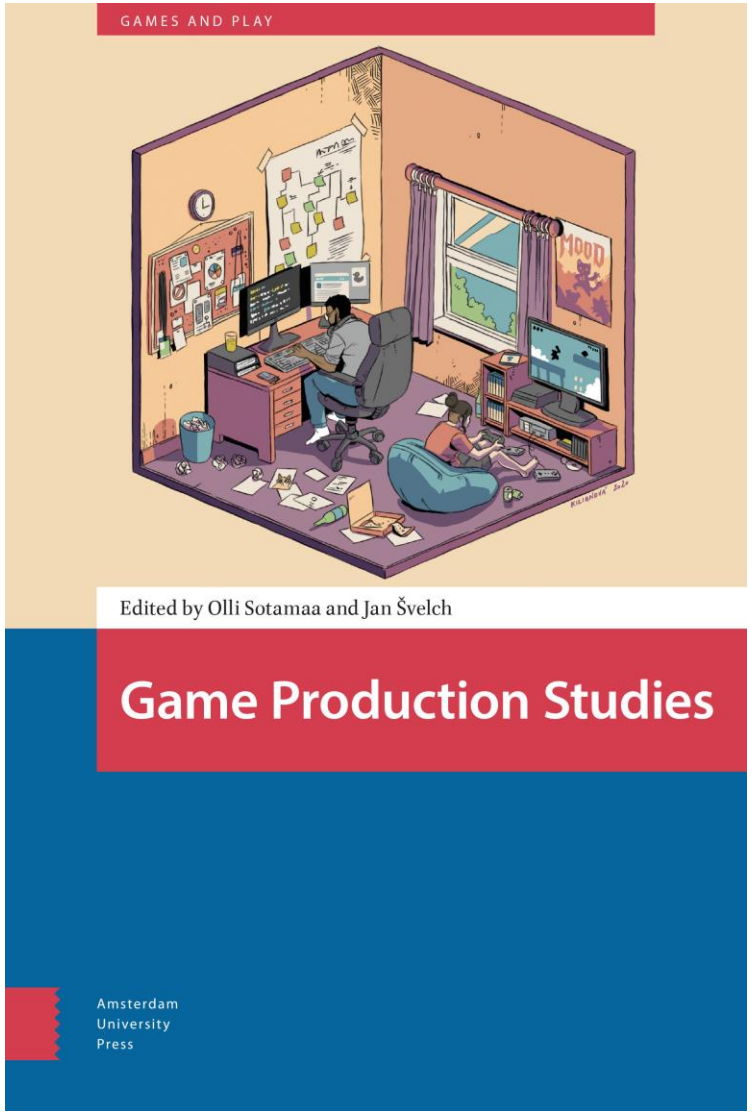
Gaming Eastern Europe: Production, Distribution and Consumption

Lars Kristensen

To cite this article: Lars Kristensen (2023) Gaming Eastern Europe: Production, Distribution and Consumption, Studies in Eastern European Cinema, 14:1, 1-7, DOI: 10.1080/2040350X.2023.2149122

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/2040350X.2023.2149122

Published online: 27 Jan 2023.


GAMES AND PLAY
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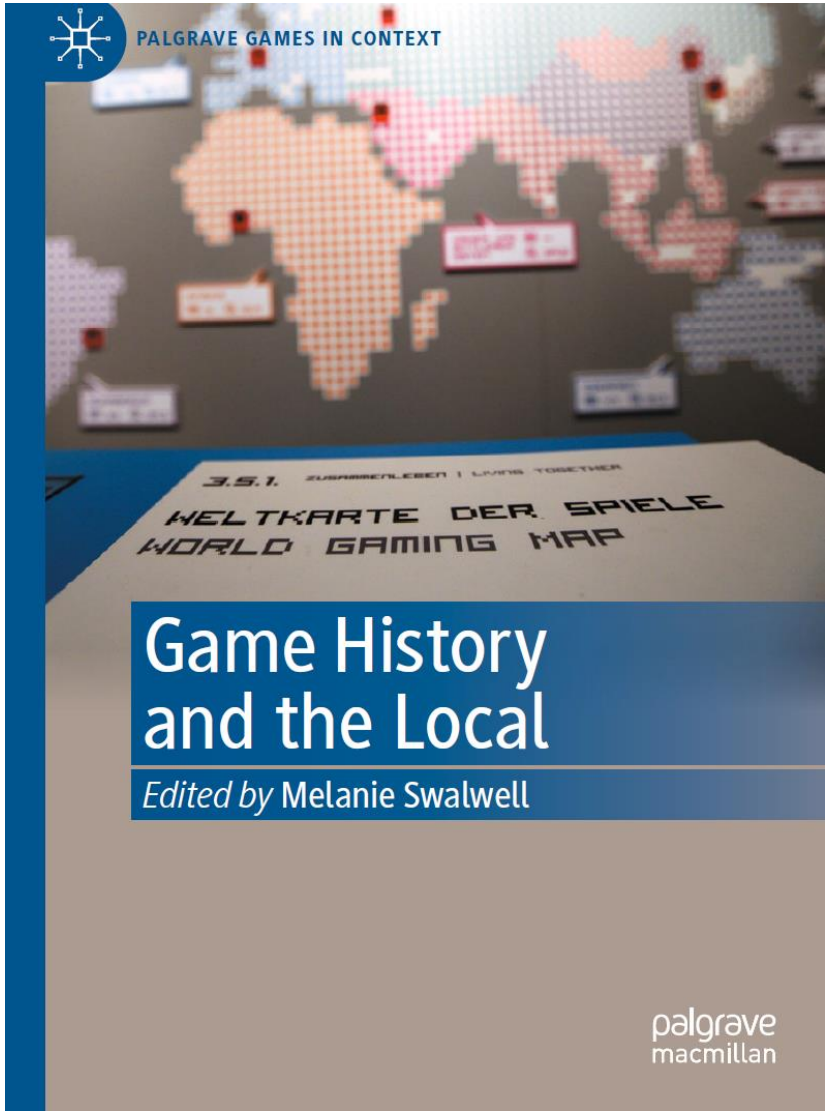
Game Production Studies
Amsterdam
University
Press


PALGRAVE GAMES IN CONTEXT
WELTKARTE DER SPIELE
WORLD GAMING MAP
Game History
and the Local
Edited by Melanie Swalwell
palgrave
macmillan

The National Perspective

The most frequent

The most often adopted as self-evident (also by me)

What about the social construction of nations?
(Anderson, 1983, *Imagined Communities…*)

“National games” or “games with national characteristics”?
(Li Mengqi & Webber, 2022, “Video Games with National Characteristics…”)

Some Analyses of National Video Games

CANADA: Parker, Jenson, 2020,
“Canadian Indie Games Between the Global and the Local”

THE UNITED KINGDOM: Webber, 2020,
“The Britishness of ‘British Video Games’”

CHINA AND THE UK: Donald, Webber, & Wright, 2023,
“Video Games, Historical Representation and Soft Power”

CHINA: Li & Li, 2023, “Debating the ‘Chineseness’ of a Mobile Game…”

JAPAN: Fiadotau, 2021, “Isolated Connectedness…”

The Present Study

Motivation and Context

There seems to be no published overview of national video game research yet

There are both theoretical and practical issues in defining national games, as exemplified by two grant projects currently running in Poland:

- “Polish Video Games? Gaming Cultures and Gaming Industry in a National Context” (Tomasz Z. Majkowski, Magdalena Kozyra, Aleksandra Prokopek)
- “The Polish Video Game Heritage (1958–2025): A Catalog and a Bibliography” (Paweł Frelik, Mirosław Filiciak, Maria B. Garda, Magdalena Kozyra, Stanisław Krawczyk, Tomasz Z. Majkowski, Aleksandra Prokopek, Agata Waszkiewicz)

Method (I)

First we gratefully borrowed a list of about 20 database categories from “The Polish Video Game Heritage…” project (that list itself had been based on an overview of existing databases)

Then we compared the list with our own review of the available academic literature, and we distinguished five general categories: 1. developer, 2. game world/content (including cultural references), 3. language, 4. gameplay, 5. target audience & marketing

(we = Stanisław Krawczyk, Agata Waszkiewicz, Tereza Krobová, Larrisa Wild, and David Krummenacher)

Method (II)

In the next step, we purposively selected 10 publications (8 articles and 2 chapters) representing several different countries, mostly in Central and Eastern Europe

For every publication, we noted whether it discussed game developers, game worlds, etc. (and if so: how this was done)

Then we distinguished definitional issues related to each of our five categories, and finally we consulted several additional publications to complement the results

What Is This Study?

A snapshot of the available academic literature on national video games

A way to organize that literature

A resource for scholars writing on national video games
or compiling lists, databases, etc.

Some Results

(HERE MOSTLY WITH POLISH EXAMPLES)

1. Developer

Troubles with the Developer

The physical location? (What about multinational companies and outsourcing?)

The location of the legal entity (and the country that receives the taxes)?

The funding sources?

The ethnic and cultural background of the company's owners and workforce?

2. Game World/Content

Troubles with Game World/Content

How many locations or cultural references do you need to define a game as national?

Are Slavic elements enough to qualify a game as Polish?

Can a developer based in Poland produce a non-Polish game?

Can a developer based outside Poland produce a Polish game?

3. Language

ŻULIONERZY
FOR WINDOWS™
Pytania polityczne wcale nie są tendencyjne!
NOWA GRA
OPCJE
WYNIKI
KREDITZ
ORTALION ENTERTAINMENT 2001 -

Kingdom Come
Deliverance

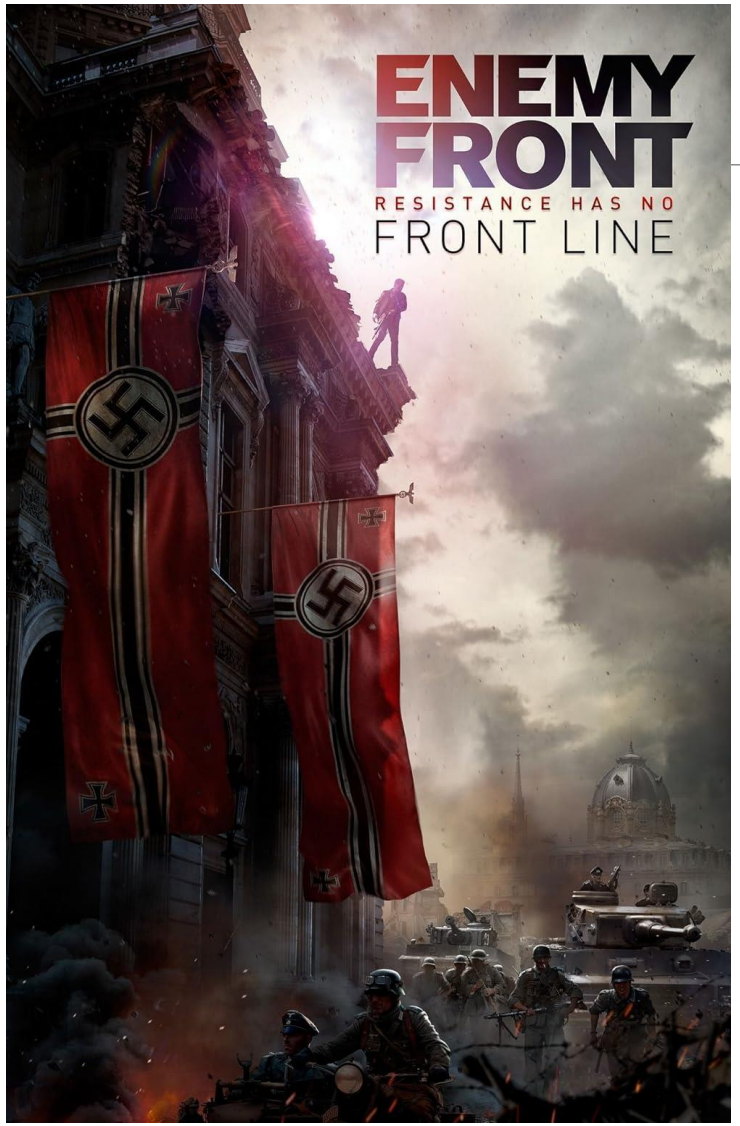
Troubles with Language

What do we do with (numerous) games that have many language versions?

Are we interested in the language in which dialogues were originally written?

What happens when new language versions are added (officially or not)?

4. Gameplay



TETRIS®

Troubles with Gameplay

Are dominant gameplay conventions “global” or rather “USA-like”?

Can national status be ascribed to gameplay itself?
Or just to the relationship between gameplay and, say, memory culture?

5. Target Group and Marketing

Troubles with the Target Group & Marketing

How much “local” marketing do you need to define a game as national?

What if marketing is outsourced?

What about hyperlocal games?

Final Thoughts

Most examples have been Central and Eastern European – Polish in particular – but the references are broader and so are the implications (I hope!)

This is not an attempt to pave the way for one binding definition
but to provide resources for different definitions serving different purposes

The five categories focus on the design and production side of games;
different people and groups may use these categories differently

Here I have brushed the issue of “media specificity” aside but it will surely be back

At the end of the day, national video games are what we define them to be

The two most frequently used categories in this definitional process are
1. developer, 2. game world/content (including cultural references). In addition, it is worth considering 3. language, 4. gameplay, 5. target audience & marketing

To what extent is the definitional process shaped by video games themselves? And by national cultures themselves?

Thank you!

HTTPS://STANISLAWKRAWCZYK.PL/